

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A method for performing an environmental audit in connection with a transaction, comprising the steps of:

assessing the environmental risk associated with a business, said ~~business~~ environmental risk comprising the environmental risk associated with a piece of land, a service operation, a current state of regulatory compliance, and the future requirements for regulatory compliance;

assigning a first indicator to said environmental risk associated with said piece of land;

assigning a second indicator to said environmental risk associated with said service operation;

assigning a third indicator to said environmental risk associated with said current state of regulatory compliance;

assigning a fourth indicator to said environmental risk associated with said future requirements for regulatory compliance; and

generating a report including said first, second, third, and fourth indicators.

Claim 2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said transaction is selected from the group consisting of a loan transaction, an insurance transaction, or a venture capital transaction.

Claim 3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said first, second, third, and fourth indicators are numerical scores.

Claim 4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein said report further includes a final indicator, said final indicator comprised of the sum of said first, second, third, and fourth indicators.

Claim 5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 3, wherein said numerical scores for each of said first, second, third, and fourth indicators are obtained by summing the values of a plurality of interim indicators, said interim indicators being generated by a computer.

Claim 6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein said plurality of interim indicators are derived from ASTM guidelines.

Claim 7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said first, second, third, and fourth indicators are reviewed and adjusted by a knowledgeable person.

Claim 8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said first, second, third, and fourth indicators are colors.

Claim 9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein said report includes a final indicator, said final indicator comprised of the combination of said first, second, third, and fourth indicators.

Claim 10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said first, second, third, and fourth indicators are alphabetical references.

Claim 11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein said report further includes a final indicator, said final indicator comprised of the sum of said first, second, third, and fourth indicators.

Claim 12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said report further comprises an explanation of low scores achieved.

Claim 13. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said report further comprises a listing of required environmental permits.

Claim 14. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said report further comprises a list of corrective action recommendations based on said audit.

Claim 15. (Currently Amended) A method for performing an environmental audit to accompany a loan transaction[[s]], comprising:

an environmental auditor performing an evaluation of environmental risk for a financial institution capable of rendering financial assistance;

wherein said financial institution comprises individual customers in need of said financial assistance from said financial institution, each of said customers being willing and able to grant rights in the collateral for said loan transactions to said financial institution ~~rights in collateral~~ in exchange for said financial assistance;

wherein said evaluation comprises the environmental risk associated with said collateral proffered by each of said customers in said population; and

wherein, said environmental auditor is able to evaluate said environmental risk for each of said collateral at a unit price that is lower than the unit price of evaluating said environmental risk for a single customer.

Claim 16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein said environmental auditor evaluates said risk associated with said collateral using a universal environmental auditing method.

Claim 17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein said universal environmental auditing method comprises the following steps:

assessing the environmental risk associated with a business, said ~~business~~ environmental risk comprising the environmental risk associated with a piece of land, a

service operation, a current state of regulatory compliance, and the future requirements for regulatory compliance;

assigning a first indicator to said environmental risk associated with said piece of land;

assigning a second indicator to said environmental risk associated with said service operation;

assigning a third indicator to said environmental risk associated with said current state of regulatory compliance;

assigning a fourth indicator to said environmental risk associated with said future requirements for regulatory compliance; and

generating a report including said first, second, third, and fourth indicators.

Claim 18. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein said environmental auditor employs personnel at one or more regional offices and at a headquarters, wherein at least a portion of said environmental audit is carried out by said personnel at said regional office and reported back to said personnel at said headquarters.

Claim 19. (Previously presented) A method for performing an environmental audit, comprising:

an environmental auditor performing an evaluation of environmental risk for an insurance company capable of issuing insurance policies;

wherein said insurance company comprises individual customers in need of said insurance policies from said insurance company, each of said customers being involved in a business operation;

wherein said evaluation of environmental risk is associated with said business operations of said customers;

said environmental risk comprising the current state of regulatory compliance;
and

wherein, said environmental auditor is able to evaluate said environmental risk associated with each of said business operations at a unit price that is lower than the unit price of said insurance company for evaluating said environmental risk for a single business operation.

Claim 20. (Previously presented) A method for performing an environmental audit, comprising the steps of:

providing a central database, said central database containing information pertaining to the environmental risk associated with a piece of land or service, said environmental risk comprising the current state of regulatory compliance; and

searching said central database in order to evaluate said environmental risk associated with said piece of land or said service; and

generating a report summarizing said environmental risk associated with said piece of land or said service.

Claim 21. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein said environmental risk associated with said current state of regulatory compliance is determined by a computer program.

Claim 22. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein said computer program forwards said environmental risk associated with said current state of regulatory compliance to an environmental auditor.

Claim 23. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein said report is automatically transmitted to a database through the use of a PDA tablet system.

Claim 24 (New) The method of claim 2, wherein an entity facilitating said loan transaction, said insurance transaction, or said venture capital transaction charges its client a fee for said report that is greater in value than the fee paid by said entity for said environmental audit.

Claim 25 (New) The method of claim 15, wherein said financial institution charges each of said customers a fee for said environmental audit that is greater in value than the fee paid by said financial institution for said environmental audit.